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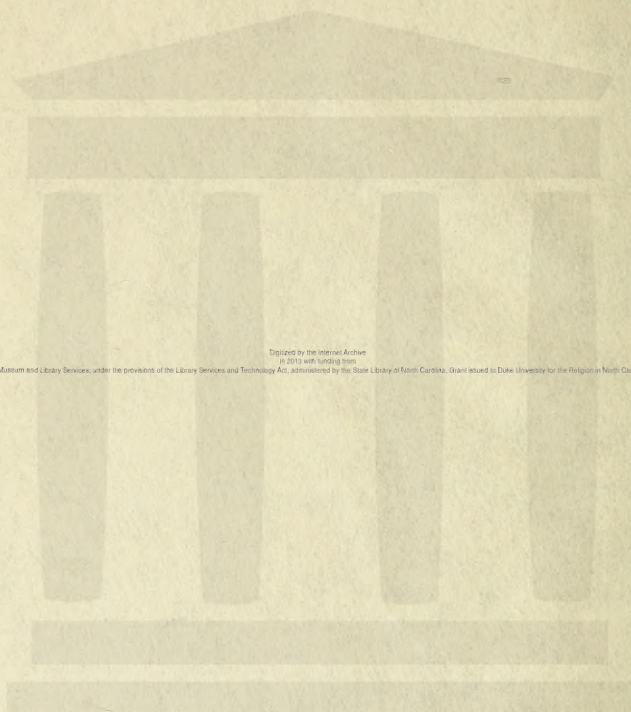
PULPIT AND ALTAR FELLOWSHIP

By

A. L. Crouse







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**REV. A. L. CROUSE,**

PROFESSOR OF

GERMAN AND THEOLOGY IN LENOIR COLLEGE.

AND AUTHOR OF

“MEMORIAL TRIBUTES,” “A CHRISTIAN CATECHISM FOR LITTLE  
CHILDREN,” AND “BIBLICAL EXCEPTIONS TO THE MODERN  
EVANGELISTIC SYSTEM.”



HICKORY, N. C.

1893.

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REV. A. L. CHURCH

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## PREFACE.

At the meeting of the North Carolina Conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Tennessee Synod in March, 1891, a committee was appointed to prepare, for publication, a treatise on Pulpit and Altar Fellowship. This committee was continued from time to time, till the meeting in May, 1892, when the undersigned was appointed to do the work. He made a partial report at the meeting in August, and a full report in December, when Conference took the following action:

We, your committee to examine the paper prepared by Rev. A. L. Crouse on Pulpit and Altar Fellowship, beg leave to submit the following:

1. That the production is clear and forcible, and to the point, and well approved by your committee.

2. That the author deserves much credit for his labor and work expended in the production of that paper.

3. That we recommend the publication of this production in pamphlet form for general distribution among our people. We would call attention, however, to the desirability of having an appended summary of a page or two, presenting the main, salient points of the argument.

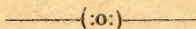
This paper of the committee was adopted, and we now send forth our little pamphlet in the hope that it will do good, and we ask for it an unbiased study.

Hickory, N. C.,

Dec 20, 1893.

A. L. CROUSE.

A TREATISE  
ON  
PULPIT AND ALTAR FELLOWSHIP.



DEFINITION.

Fellowship is "the state or relation of being a fellow or associate." "A fellow is one who follows, an adherent, a companion, a comrade, an associate, a sharer." "Pulpit" is used here for the whole office of preaching and teaching. "Altar" is used for the service of the Lord's Supper. Pulpit fellowship embraces all the force of the term fellow among those who preach and teach in the same place, upon the same plane of equality, and with the same authority and endorsement. Churches whose pastors and teachers co-operate with each other have pulpit and altar fellowship. Churches which receive the ministrations and instructions of each other's pastors and teachers have pulpit fellowship. Churches whose pastors and teachers become substitutes and supplies for each other have pulpit fellowship; and this holds good as well for one service as for a dozen; but it does not apply to the loan of a church for the use of those who do not have pulpit fellowship, and therefore cannot receive the instructions usually imparted in it, but must hire, or borrow it, for their own use. Those who preach and teach together and for each other are pulpit companions, comrades, associates and sharers. They may be so in a right and honest manner or they may not be right in such fellowship. This is to be considered in these pages.

Persons who receive the Lord's Supper at the same time and place, and in the same manner, have altar fellowship. They are

associates in the same act. They are sharers of the same thing. This fellowship may be right, or it may be wrong. This is a question for our consideration.

Where there is agreement this pulpit and altar fellowship is right; otherwise it is not. As it is frequently practiced among the different communions it is not right, because they are not agreed, else they would not exist separately. Their differences are their cause and excuse for separate existence. Many of the different denominations are themselves many times subdivided. If they had not disagreed with the parent body, they would have remained with it. After such separation all fellowship between them differed from their former associations and companionships. If they had no occasion to separate they should not have done so. If they had sufficient reason to go out and set up for themselves, they should not deny it and stultify themselves by asserting that they are all one.

The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century was successfully carried out by the Lutherans. Many arose about that time and since, who disagreed with the Lutherans, and so went out from them, and set up for themselves establishments, in which they preserved with their erroneous differences more or less elements of truth. They thus placed themselves at variance with the Lutherans, so that fellowship with them must be without agreement. To fellowship them in their teachings and communions is either to declare that their are no differences, or to ignore them. It then follows further in this definition that such fellowship requires dissembling. Those who are not agreed cannot walk together as comrades without pretending that there is no difference. They must appear outwardly to be what they are not at heart. The conduct of the Church and the language of Jeremiah are applicable in studying this question of walking with others and dissembling in holy things. "The Lord hath said concerning you, O ye remnant of Judah; Go ye not into Egypt: know certainly that I have admonished you this day. For ye dissembled in your hearts, when ye sent me unto the Lord your God, saying, Pray for us unto the

Lord our God; and according unto all that the Lord our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do it. And now I have this day declared it unto you; but you have not obeyed the voice of the Lord your God, nor any thing for the which he hath sent me unto you. Now therefore know certainly that ye shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, in the place whither ye desire to go and to sojourn." Jer. 42; 19-22. The people pretended that if the prophet would declare unto them the sayings of the Lord, they would perform all. But they dissembled, and would not obey the voice of God. Lutherans who claim, rightfully, that their system is in strict accordance with all that the Lord our God hath said, cannot obey the voice of their God by fellowshiping those whose systems are not in perfect accord with the Scriptures, and in attempting to do so they must appear as those who dissemble. "I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers." Ps. 26; 4.

Then pulpit and altar fellowship of Lutherans with others is the denial of the existence of their errors, or the acknowledgment that error is not to be condemned.

#### IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT.

Among us Lutherans fellowship in the spiritual things of our Lord is an important matter. It has always been such in the more honest parts of the Church from the times of Luther and the other reformers. Of late this importance has been asserted, within the bounds of the United Synod, by those who deny that the Confessions treat of this matter. Some aver that it is a matter of indifference. This is the most fallacious position that is taken. It satisfies itself with any side of the question, or rather with none at all. It is willing for those who fellowship errorists to be recognized as consistent Lutherans, and it is also willing for those who refuse such fellowship to be tolerated, and insists that there is *no difference* between those who believe and act *differently*. Contrary to this go-between, indifferent opinion, is the truth that it is a question of such importance that it cannot be set aside in this way. "No man can serve two masters, for

either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Matt. 6; 24. "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." Luke 11; 23.

If Lutherans have the pure doctrine and sacraments they are, in that respect, separate from errorists, If any among us think or doubt that we have these they are not consistent in bearing our name. It is then a great matter whether those who hold and teach the truth can fellowship those who are allied with systems of more or less patent error. If this kind of fellowship is allowed in God's word, it is important for those who hold it to know that they are certainly right in doing so. If it is not allowed in God's word it is important for those who refuse it to be assured that they act rightly, and that they may be thus fortified against the accusations of those who allege that they do no wrong, and accuse them of selfishness, bigotry, etc.

Further it is an important matter in the light of the Confessions of the Church. The Confessions set down some things as indifferent. There have been however various disputings about what *are* such indifferent things, and it is easy to observe that the number of these is always greater among those who are least concerned about purity of doctrine. If any doctrine is not acceptable to their own opinions and preferences, they ease themselves of it by tossing it aside among the things indifferent. And that is the way in which this fellowship question came to be placed there. One way to decide this question of importance or indifference is to search and see whether the Book of Concord itself makes it a matter of indifference. This it does not do, and a Lutheran can not be faithful to it when he sets up this claim for it.

In the XV Art. Augs. Con. this matter is treated thus: "Concerning ecclesiastical rites instituted by men it is taught, that those should be observed which can be so observed without sin, and which promote peace and good order in the Church: as, certain holidays, festivals, and the like." Now it is clear to all that fellowship with errorists is not referred to here. The preach-

ing and teaching of the word of God and the administration of the Lord's Supper are not ecclesiastical rites instituted by men. Men did not issue the command: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." This is not, in the sense of the Augs. Con., one of the indifferent things, because it was not uttered by men. Our Lord Jesus Christ instituted his Holy Supper, and said "this do ye," and therefore it is important to obey this command as his, and not as an institution of men.

"Further we shall keep ourselves entirely aloof from the consecration of tapers, palms, cakes, oats, spices, etc."—*Smallcald Articles*, XV. Here nothing is said about fellowship with errorists, and the kind of things mentioned is so different that it is impossible to believe that it is implied. It is plain therefore that the Church does not here place pulpit and altar fellowship among the things indifferent.

The Formula of Concord, Art. X, Dec., concerning "things indifferent," says: "Among some theologians of the Augsburg Confession, a controversy has likewise arisen concerning those ceremonies or church usages which are neither commanded nor prohibited in the word of God, but are introduced into the Church for the purpose of preserving good order and decorum, or other Christian discipline." Again in this place the reference is to "ceremonies or church usages," as things indifferent, and all know that the teaching of the word of God and the use of the Lord's Supper are not ceremonies or church usages, but matters of far more importance. Many outside of the Lutheran Church do indeed give them, especially the Lord's Supper, no higher place, but over against them we confess differently, and so too must we hold against those even among us who admit that such are right.

Pulpit and altar fellowship of Lutherans with errorists is also an important question, because it is usually a test of soundness in doctrine. Those who practice it generally defend it by either repudiating altogether some of our doctrines, or placing them

among the things indifferent. They also frequently ignore the right place of doctrine in the system of Christianity. If the importance of pure doctrine is urged, some sneer with indifference, even disdain, and say that "we must be about our Master's business," as though the doctrine or teaching of Gospel truth is none of the Master's business. They are unwilling to admit or see about it that doctrine is first, and that all other things are consequences. If doctrine is right consequences may be right, but if doctrine is wrong consequences must be wrong. Faith must be first, or the works which follow cannot be truly Christian, no matter how well they appear in the eyes of men. They may even cast out devils in the Lord's name, and yet he not recognize them.

#### THE RIGHT RULE AND ITS CONFESSION.

The rule is found in the Holy Scriptures. The confession or acknowledgment has grown out of the rule, and is the stalk of the seed. If any do not believe that the confession is right, they must find a conflict between it and the rule, else they will antagonize the rule itself. They who claim to be consistent Lutherans must admit that the confession sets forth what is exhibited in the rule. When therefore we appeal to the confession among ourselves, we do not go beyond the rule, but simply appeal to the bond of our union in the reception and use of the rule. Then if any object to such appeal to the confession they interrupt our bond of union, and cause divisions among us, because they incline to others who have separated themselves from our union more than they do to those of their own household. They also stand in the way of the rule, if it be so that the confession is in perfect harmony with it.

As we consult both the rule and the confession concerning pulpit and altar fellowship, it will be clearly seen, as it has always been by the unbiassed, that there is no conflict between them, but that our Lutheran Church confesses what is found in the word of God. The rule is that those who have the pure doctrine, and maintain and practice it, cannot be the spiritual companions, comrades, adherents, associates, and sharers of errorists, and

therefore the confession condemns them, thus decidedly forbidding pulpit and altar fellowship with them in all its places where it condemns erroneous doctrines and practices.

In the rule right fellowship requires agreement. Unfeigned fellowship in the pulpit and at the altar with non-Lutherans is an impossibility. No other system, Greek, Romish, or Protestant agrees with the Lutheran in its confession and teaching of the Christian religion. All others are, more or less, so much at variance with it in its vital parts, as not only to be differently denominated, but of such recognized antagonism of principles and practices as to discover disagreement to the most casual observer. They do not bear the same name, confess and practice the same things. All see and can well understand this, and all know very well that there is disagreement, and such disagreement is a bar to fellowship. The Scriptures plainly teach the impossibility of fellowship where there is want of agreement. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" Amos 3: 3. Read the context and the evident answer is *no*. The Lutheran and other systems are not agreed, and therefore cannot walk together, unless it be contrary to this plain Scripture.

Should it be suggested that "in so far" as two are agreed they can walk together, we must not fail to note that the prophet used no such language, and therefore left no room for any such conclusion. If the Holy Spirit had meant to encourage this "in so far as" measure, he would have moved the prophet to teach it in so many words. We must begin where the prophet began and leave off where he left off. The very fact that he does not say "except *in so far as* they be agreed" is enough to forbid us to suggest it as a kind of supplement to the mind of the Spirit. Neither does the text make provision for an agreement in some things and a disagreement in others. It is an unqualified term—"except they be agreed." This is an answer to one objection to our true Lutheran rule.

Where there are things indifferent there is no cause for disagreement. They are not subjects of dissension, and do not con-

stitute part of the disagreement between the Lutheran and other systems; except where they have been removed from their own sphere, in which case they have strengthened the variance and more and more interfered with fellowship. This also answers an objection raised by some against the true rule.

Here let it be remarked that fellowship is "the state or relation of being a fellow or associate," and that "a fellow is one who follows." A Lutheran cannot follow those who are not Lutherans for they are strangers, and "a stranger will they not follow."—John 10; 5. Non-Lutherans cannot follow Lutherans, because they are not agreed with them. As neither can follow the other it is certain that they are not fellows, and can have no honest fellowship. A fellow is not only one who follows, but he is also "an adherent." It is not possible for Lutherans to adhere to systems and practices of non-Lutherans with whom they are not agreed. Even a politician, however shrewd, cannot well adhere to more than one party. The people throughout the country refuse co-operation of different political parties, and cry down all attempts of any to adhere to more than one party, but many are not so consistent in their church relations, which are of far greater importance. In the 18th chapter of 2nd Chronicles, we learn how dangerous it was when Jehoshaphat "joined affinity with Ahab," and thus became his adherent. This fairly answers an objection to the right rule.

To be a fellow, or to have fellowship, also involves the responsibility of "a companion, a comrade an associate, a sharer," all of which is impossible with those who are not agreed, such as Lutherans and non-Lutherans. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit," (1 Cor. 6; 17) not two, or more, or as many as he may unite with in the fellowship of an adherent, companion, associate, etc. When one who is not agreed with another fellowships such one he becomes a sharer or partaker of that which he repudiates in that one. "for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." 2 John 11. But the objection may be made that we do not see that their deeds are evil. Then, we answer, why do

you carry on home mission work to build a church near theirs, or why do they not unite with us, rather than come and set up opposition communions near us?

For those who disagree, as Lutherans and non-Lutherans certainly do, it is impossible to unite in such fellowship as becomes "the whole body fitly joined together." Eph. 4; 16. Those who are not agreed are not "*FITLY* joined together," however much they strive for fellowship, and it is not such dishonest union that "maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Those who are not "*FITLY joined together*" can never, by affected unionistic "work of the ministry \* \* \* \* come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Eph. 4; 12, 13. Lutherans and others fellowshiping one another in the pulpit and at the altar, as companions, adherents, comrades, associates, and sharers, have not learned such things from St. Paul, who says; "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." 1 Cor. 1; 10. These expressions of Paul, "speak the same thing," "be no divisions," "perfectly joined together," "same mind," and "same judgment," are unmistakably plain and strong against fellowship of those who disagree, and they are also forcible against the idea that "in so far as they agree" they may fellowship, because it is here required that there be "no divisions." It cannot be said that there are "no divisions when some in the Lord's Supper say "this is Christ's body," and others say "this represents Christ's body," or "this is an emblem of Christ's body." This is not speaking the same thing.

In setting forth the right rule we remember that the objection to our practice of it is often made that love or charity interposes to remove all these barriers to union and fellowship, and that if Lutherans love others they should have them preach in their churches, and that they all should commune together. This

objection is especially urged concerning families whose members are divided in spiritual things and are not of the "same mind." It is urged that "charity shall cover the multitude of sins." 1 Pet. 4: 8. But we reply that love never condones, connives at, or fellowships sins. Neither does it cover the multitude, or even one error or defilement. Love demands candor, for we are taught that "open rebuke is better than secret love." Prov. 27: 5. We may, and indeed should, love all persons with whom we are not agreed, but we cannot, we dare not, love and fellowship their errors, many or few, and by the very fact that they hold these errors they, not we, set up a barrier to our fellowshiping them. They may indeed come and sit and hear as God's people hear the words of life, but the trouble is that they will not do them; that is, rather than accept all that God hath spoken, they cling to their own erroneous ideas and human reason. Of these and their kind of love the prophet speaks, when he says, Ezek. 33: 31: "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." When they hear the words of Christ "This is my body," they say this is impossible, and go out and establish a communion where it can be said "this represents, is an emblem;" or anything else which their reason suggests. Shall we then for charity sake ask them to come in and commune with us, as though there were no difference, when and where we hear and receive Christ's own words? We cannot, for by so doing, we encourage them to do wrong, and love never should proceed in such way. No sincere love insists upon others doing what would be hurtful to them just for the sake of making a show of our love. For persons to receive the Lord's Supper in its purity, when they do not believe its words is positively injurious to them. "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." 1 Cor. 11: 29. Those who do not accept the words of Christ do not discern the presence of the Lord's body, and hence, according to this Scripture, eat and

drink damnation to themselves. The husband who loves his wife cannot constrain her to eat and drink with him, if she does not discern the Lord's body, but should rather say to her, for her own good, I cannot encourage you to do what the Scripture teaches would be surely hurtful to you. It will be better for you to refrain from eating and drinking when and where the true body and blood of Christ are truly given and received, and hence I cannot invite you. To all that I have you are truly welcome, but this is not mine to give. This is a fair and honest answer to this objection, and will satisfy all who are willing to consider the subject from the standpoint of God's word rather than from their family relations. The word of God does not disturb their true relations to each other, but rather leads them in the right channel.

The divine rule, or Holy Scripture, further teaches that love is no apology for fellowship with those with whom we are not agreed, because love must be without pretense. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:" 1 Pet. 1; 22. Paul in his instructions to Titus to "speak the things which become sound doctrine" required "That the aged men be sound in faith, in charity." Tit. 2; 1, 2. This cannot be done by fellowshiping those who are unsound in faith, and unsound in love, because by so doing we practically say to them that there is no difference between sound and unsound faith, sound and unsound, feigned and unfeigned love. Many indeed make no difference, and with them pulpit and altar fellowship with any kind of errorists is a natural consequence.

This plea for fellowship with those of unsound faith is no new thing, hence we find it written, 2 John 6, 7, "And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, that as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it. for many deceivers are entered into the world." Love requires, according to this inspiration, compliance with the Lord's command's, and especially because of deceivers. Love requires that we walk in *his* commandments, and not in the fellowship of those

who "teach for doctrines the commandments of men." Matt. 15; 9.

It is written by the apostle Jude, 3d verse, that we should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," and this is practically enforced in the 12th verse, where fellowship is referred to as follows: "These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear." There must have been admitted some times, even then, to the love feasts those who were not afraid to eat unworthily. They could not have been there without the permission of the saints, who must earnestly contend for the faith, but this fellowship is declared to be spots in the feasts. From all that can be found in the Scriptures concerning love, or charity, nothing can be drawn which tolerates or favors fellowship with those who are in spiritual error, however much we may love them.

To study this rule of Scripture further, we find that fellowship with errorists is a departure of the Church from its original purity.

#### IN ITS ANCIENT DISPENSATION.

After the calling of Abraham the Church began to unfold and develop itself into more perfect organism, consisting of parts, of which the functions of each are essential to the existence of the whole, and of each of the parts. Of these essential parts we find circumcision so prominent that the stranger in the house, or church, as well as the homeborn, must either be circumcised or cut off from fellowship. Gen. 17. This prerequisite to recognition and affiliation was scrupulously guarded by the Abrahamic Church. The Church in its deliverance from Egypt, and after its baptism unto Moses, not only was enjoined to preserve its distinctness, but received such other ordinances and requirements from the Lord as necessarily marked more clearly its separation from all others. Chief among these was the passover, and as we proceed to notice the divine requirements concerning it, we must bear in mind that the restrictions which were connected with its observance had no respect to the moral fitness of those who were not members of the Mosaic church, or even to the privilege to eat the passover which the people of God might, in charity, be inclined to afford

them. To us it would seem that some pious, God fearing Gentiles had a right to and should have been accorded the privilege of eating the passover. Doubtless many possessed more moral fitness than hosts of those in the camp. God himself determined these matters. "And the Lord said unto Moses and Aaron, this is the ordinance of the passover: there shall no stranger eat thereof: But every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof." Ex. 13; 42-45. Plain language cannot be found, and it must be observed that there is not a word about the fitness of the foreigner, whether he was a servant of the Lord or not. God gave his people a rule by which they should be guided in their dispensation of his things, and he has given us rules for the same purpose. He did not allow them to judge of those who did not walk with them according to these regulations, and he does not allow us, who would be faithful to his commands and doctrines, to judge others, but requires us to deal with them according to his directions. Neither do we hear anything of the charity, or of the policy which the ancient church might exercise toward others, for it is further written: "And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will eat the passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof. ONE LAW SHALL BE TO HIM THAT IS HOMEBORN, AND UNTO THE STRANGER THAT SOJOURNETH AMONG YOU." Ex. 12; 48, 49. This was God's requirement, and the people were not left to do as they pleased out of charity, or any sentiment or impulse of their own. He gave them his own directions of their charity, and such charity as is unwilling to be guided by him has none of the elements of true love, but is conceived and born of carnality, and reared and cultivated by mere sentimentality or human reason. It is a matter of great importance to observe the one law to the homeborn and to the sojourning stranger. Lutherans very properly require their ministers to teach and preach according to their confession of "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Jude 3. This they

cannot do of non-Lutherans whom they may admit into their pulpits. We may *suppose* that they will teach nothing *contrary* to our faith, but is this the one law under which we lay our own ministers? Surely not. Our law does not bind us merely to teach and preach nothing *contrary* to our confessions, but its greater force consists in binding us to teach and preach *agreeably thereto*. Let this one law apply to all, and if any who do not agree with us, wish to preach in our pulpits, or teach in our Sunday Schools, let them come to us and yield themselves unto this one law, and also come not to sojourn, but abide and go along with us, and then shall they be as the home born in the land. No political party even is willing for the good people whom they love in another party to come into its councils and meetings, make speeches for them and instruct them how to proceed. Neither are they willing to divide with them trophies of victory, unless they come into their ranks and faithfully ally themselves. Then it is none the less reasonable for the oldest and purest communion in the Protestant world to deal so with others who have gone out, and are everywhere building up churches and erecting altars against hers.

The same application must be made to the Holy Communion. We require of our own people assent to our pure Scriptural doctrine and practice in relation to the Lord's Supper. We instruct them in these things, that they may know why they approach it, and what they receive. This one law must apply to all. Others must, if they will eat with us, come to us, and come to stay, as we confirm our own people to our doctrines and practices and confirm them to stay. They must not do like Hobab, the visitor in the camp of Israel, when urged to forsake all else, and journey with God's circumcised and chosen, returned to the land of Midian.—Num. 10: 29-32. One law must be to all, and they must be circumcised of every unsound doctrine, else we cannot walk with them, because the Lord hath forbidden it.

Whoever in Israel, either in charity or out of policy, connived or encouraged a rejection of the divine doctrine by others, became equally guilty before God, who is not to be mocked by ignoring

what he says. When Israel received such violators into her sanctuary, and thus became their fellows and associates, she was charged by God with having broken his covenant, and as not having kept their charge of his holy things. Of these violations the Lord bitterly complains through his prophets, and we will let one quotation from Ezekiel suffice to show how serious a matter it is to take the holy things of God into our own hands and to pollute them in the exercise of our own ideas of charity and policy. "And thou shalt say to the rebellious, even to the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; O ye house of Israel, let it suffice you of all your abominations; In that ye brought into my sanctuary strangers, uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it, even my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and they have broken my covenant because of all your abominations. And ye have not kept the charge of mine holy things, but ye have set keepers of my charge in my sanctuary for yourselves. Thus saith the Lord God; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is *among* the children of Israel."—Ezek. 44; 6-9.

It may be said that these things were said and done in olden times, and are not applicable to us who have the gospel, and are under the law of liberty. But there is no law of liberty which allows us to do wrong, by disregarding the unchangeable will and infallible sayings of the Lord. He is of the same mind now that he was then. "I am the Lord, I change not." Mal. 3; 6. Right here it is proper for us to examine a very common excuse made for inter-communion: "It is the Lord's table; not mine." This is a well varnished trick of that old deceiver, who always accomplishes more by *appearing* to be right than wrong. It is a very plausible excuse for giving it to all who will have it to say that it is the Lord's table. But that is the very reason why we should not give it out as we might choose to give our own. That is what the Lord complained of in Ezekiel's time—they did with his holy things as they pleased, and not as he directed. "Ye have not

kept the charge of *mine* holy things, but ye have set keepers of *my* charge in *my* sanctuary for *yourselves*." What would a man do to his employee, or business manager, who would dare to give away his things as he pleased, in charity or out of policy, and give as his excuse that they are my employer's; not mine! Such liberty with earthly things in trust is never excused, but some, as in the days of the prophet, dare take it with God's holy things. Thus this objection to what is called close-communion is so fairly answered that it needs no more.

Fellowship with errorists is a departure of the Church from its original purity;

## II. IN ITS CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.

There is no more liberty to mingle purity with error under the new dispensation of the Church than under the old. Fellowship of those who accept all of the things which are written with those who receive only a part, however great, is no more pleasing, or even allowable, in the sight of God at one time than at another, and is not in keeping with the purity of the Christian Church in its apostolic age. Such fellowship was scrupulously avoided and guarded against by the apostles in all their efforts to plant and water the Church. Even while they followed the Master in his humiliation, they displayed in their conduct, however misguided their zeal, settled convictions of the impossibility of fellowship between those who are not fellows, associates, comrades, etc., in all the reality which these terms imply. Doubtless these convictions were the result, first, of what they had learned as Jewish worshippers; and, secondly, from such expressions of their Lord as that "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other." Matt. 6: 24. For to fellowship those with whom we are not agreed is to render, or to attempt to render service to another master or system. To do this our own must be forsaken. Impressed in this way the zeal of the disciples outdid their prudence, and upon one occasion received a rebuke, as in Mark 9: 38-40, where it is written: "And John answered him, saying,

Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us; and we forbade him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part." This language has been quoted by some modern unionists as favoring, if not requiring, our fellowship with those who follow not with us. Nothing can be further from the truth. The Master said not a word about fellowship, but he did teach his disciples religious toleration, nothing more nor less. The Lutheran Church has learned from these words of her Lord to be the most tolerant of any. She has learned from her divine rule of faith that the spirit of intolerance and the doctrine of non-fellowship are as much opposed to each other as are the word of God and the commandments of men.

So carefully did the Jewish element of the Christian Church guard against improper and unscriptural fellowship, that they, at first, refused to receive the Gentile portion, which was not another communion, but a real part of the body of Christ. Still these Jewish Christians had a right to know first whether the converted Gentiles were agreed with those unto whom the Gospel had first been preached at Jerusalem, for if they had not been agreed they could never have walked together in the fellowship of love unfeigned. Acts, 11.

Paul, passing throught the upper coasts of Ephesus, found certain disciples, but he did not immediately take them by the hand, wish them God speed, and, with much ado, rejoice in their fellowship, until he had examined them, whether they were agreed. Finding that they were not, he instructed, catechised, and baptized them. Then he laid hands upon them, and they were entitled to fellowship. Acts, 19.

It is not unworthy of mention that one of the strongest, if not the very strongest, passages in the New Testament against fellowship with those who are wanting in the acceptance of *all* the doctrines of the Christian religion has been penned "by the disciple whom Jesus loved," and who has been recognized as the

one chief among his brethren in his own exercise of this divine law of love. John's tenderness of heart, as it is spoken of in the Scriptures, seems to be worthy of study and imitation, for it was manifestly without dissimulation. And we are persuaded that if we suffer the love of God which is shed abroad in our hearts to control us as it did him, there will be found in each of us the greatest of the three great subjects of St. Paul's 13th chapter of first Corinthians, and if we love as St. John did, we are in no serious danger of being spurned "as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." St. John loved, and was charitable, but he could not yield this love as a servant of disrespect or indifference to the revelation of God who first loved him. And much as this loving disciple might love others, the Spirit of truth, when he had come and had guided John into all truth, moved him to put upon record the necessity of first knowing of all men, whether they have brought the doctrine of Christ, before they can be received into the house of those who do so love the Master that they keep his commandments of truth and love. Plainer words than he has left us we cannot find. We refer to 2 John 9-11: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God, He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds." In this place it is to be noted that the ground of fellowship is to be determined by the doctrine, and not by our estimation of the character of those coming unto us, or even by our love for them. Neither can the objection be set up and maintained that the evil deeds of which we are not to be partakers, are the deeds of evil men, and not what we conceive to be the errors of good men. The text does not speak of evil men, as such, but says "Whosoever," that is any one, however good in appearance. It says if there come ANY. It speaks expressly of the DOCTRINE. Of this we are actually required in the divine word to judge. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but TRY

the spirits whether they are of God." 1 John 4; 4. The trial of the spirits is the trial of the teaching or doctrine, for the doctrine which a man brings is, if good, the intuition of the good Spirit, but if bad, the prompting of evil spirits. This is manifest from 1 Cor. 2; 12: "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." Also, 1 John 4; 6: "We are of God: he that knoweth God, heareth us, he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." Matt. 7; 15: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." This objection to our refusal of fellowship with those who bring not the doctrine of Christ is now fairly answered again in this place, and we must not forget that it will be easy for us to become partakers of the rejection of the doctrines of our Savior.

This fellowship is also wrong in the light of what James says: "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." Jas. 1; 18. It is double mindedness and instability in those Lutherans who engage in fellowship of those who bring not the doctrine of Christ, to try to build up their own churches by such means, and at the same time an encouragement to others to proselyte our people. When we bring them in to teach us and for us, and bid them God speed, we make believe to our people that their system of doctrine is as correct as our own, and our people are thus encouraged to leave us and go with them. We simply prepare our own material for others to whom we accord fellowship. This makes us positive and negative in our operations. This is the principal reason why the increase of the Lutheran Church has been so much less in those parts which fellowship non-Lutherans. The Romanists never encourage their people to go over to other communions by this double dealing. Besides all this, the Protestant communions around us do not look upon us as orthodox, and the very fact that they consider us unsound is an evidence that they reject our doctrine, which we know to be that of Christ. If they thought our

system Scriptural, they would be bound to think it safe, and they ought to let alone those who are connected with it. Instead of this they are vigorous in their efforts to proselyte. Consider the vast sums of money collected and appropriated to missions in Lutheran countries to turn our people away from the pure doctrine of Christ to other systems, which reject many of his teachings. Here, among us, they would reach the hand of fellowship; there, they put forth the hand that plucks from the garden within their neighbor's wall. We are forced by their own rejection of our sound doctrine and their persistent efforts to make this rejection practical and forceful by proselytism, to speak in the language of our blessed Redeemer: "Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." Matt. 23; 15.

It is this rejection of improper fellowship, here enjoined for want of the doctrine of Christ, which is in perfect harmony with what is written in Heb. 13: 10: "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle." Those who serve the tabernacle are they who hold the doctrine that the Lord's Supper is a mere ceremony or memorial service of the Church; that it is typical, shadowy, or emblematic, much like the service of the ancient tabernacle. Such have no right to eat where the true body and blood of Christ are given and received.

Many more references to Scripture on this point might be made, but if these are not enough a thousand more would also fail to satisfy those who are too biased to study the doctrine whether it be of God. We will not, however, leave out Rom. 16; 17: "Now I beseech you brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. The causes of the distress among the sundered parts of Christendom lie at the door of those who left the Church as Christ established it, and caused divisions *contrary to the doctrine*. For a time all "continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Acts 2: 42. But false teachers introduced themselves; as Jesus said

they would, and caused divisions, which made it necessary to cut off from fellowship those who erred. It is not our purpose to consult the history of the ancient church after the apostles had written their epistles, but we shall proceed to the time of the reformation of the Church, and briefly notice that fellowship with errorists is contrary to what the Church holds and teaches in her confessions. Of course what is said here can be helpful to those only who are honest Lutherans, and accept the confessions cordially. The confessions are often mutilated, warped, and twisted by those who are not sincere Lutherans, just as the Bible is often treated by many who are not humble, faithful Christians.

In preparing the Augsburg Confession the reformers not only defined and confessed the truth, but likewise pointed out and condemned what is in conflict with it. Referring to heresies and heretics, errors and errorists, they say that they are "rejected and condemned." In the first twenty-one articles there are no less than thirteen of these plain condemnatory sentences. Without these that great confession would not be complete. To throw them out, or disregard them, would be to mutilate the confession. Those who acknowledge it must acknowledge them. Those who are honest and faithful to it must be honest and faithful to them. No one can be honest and faithful to it, by fellowshiping what it rejects and condemns. The tenth article sets forth the true doctrine of the Lord's Supper, and then says: "The opposite doctrine is therefore rejected." We cannot be honest and say to those who hold the opposite doctrine: "We are all one. You are invited to this feast of love," if we reject their doctrines which are contrary to ours, which we hold to be what Christ has instituted and commanded.

This fourteenth article says "that no one should teach or preach publicly in the church, or administer the sacraments without a regular call." The Church cannot condemn those whose doctrines are unsound, and then allow them to minister in its pulpits and altars. It cannot call them regularly, and those whom it cannot call it must not receive and hear.

We shall refer to only a few places in the Book of Concord in which this matter of fellowship is decided against those of the contrary doctrine.

In the twenty-fifth article of the Augsburg Confession it is stated: "For the custom is retained among us, not to administer the Sacrament unto those who have not been previously examined and absolved." This is what we require of our own people, and we should have but one law. Some hold confession and absolution on Saturday; others on Sunday, and insist upon their people attending to it. Then, after confession, they invite others to commune, who have not been examined and absolved. In this way they have one law for one class, and another, or rather none, for another class. They have respect of persons. They show much more leniency and latitude to strangers than they do to their own people. They sit in judgment and say, our own people must be examined and absolved, but for others it is unnecessary. This is making a difference in requirements but not in privileges.

In the first paragraph of the article on the Sacrament of the Altar in the Large Catechism, we find the following: "For we are not disposed to permit those to approach the Sacrament, nor to administer it to them, who do not know what they seek there, or why they approach it." Those who hold the doctrine of emblems, etc., do not seek there the body and blood of the Lord. Those who believe that it is merely a memorial do not know why they approach it. We cannot admit such to the Lord's Supper without violating our confession. It may be said that many of our own people do not understand the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. That may be to some extent our own fault, but while they are not theologians, and need not be, they do not hold false doctrines nor ally themselves with those who do. We can and should instruct them so that they may accept the plain, simple words of Jesus; and to know that it is wrong to change them so that they may hear of emblems, representations, etc.

In the Formula of Concord we find the following adopted from Luther's writings: "I reckon all those in the same number, that

is, as sacramentarians and fanatics—for such they are—who will not believe that the bread of the Lord in the Supper is his true, natural body, which the ungodly or Judas, as well as St. Peter and all other saints, received orally; whoever, I say, will not believe this, should let me alone, and not expect to HOLD FELLOWSHIP WITH ME; and to this principle I must adhere.” This is so plain that any may see that the Lutheran Church rejects fellowship with those who deny the real presence of the body and blood of Christ and its oral reception in the Lord’s Supper. Whether they will see it is a different thing. And that this was then the sense of the Augsburg Confession appears clearly from what follows immediately. “From this exposition, but more especially from Dr. Luther’s explanation, who is the principal divine of the Augsburg Confession, every intelligent person, who loves truth and peace, can perceive with certainty what has always been the *proper meaning* of the *Augsburg Confession*.” And beyond all question this settles the matter. The Church cannot hold pulpit and altar fellowship with those who do not agree with her in doctrine. . This is a question plainly settled in her confessions. Those who say that it is not settled in the confessions, simply do not accept and endorse the confessions, but are still willing to seek to honor themselves with their name.

## A SHORT STATEMENT OF THE SUBJECT.

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1. Pulpit fellowship is the exchange of preaching, or any ministerial service, between pastors. If one takes the place of another to officiate in his place, and, in turn, receives or allows the same from the other, they thus exchange with each other, and have fellowship. When Lutherans swap off with others, they have fellowship with them. When they invite, or allow, others to preach for them they have fellowship with them. See pages 3, 4.

2. When Lutherans invite others to receive the Lord's Supper with them, or go and receive it with others, they have altar fellowship with them, which is wrong. See page 3.

3. This is not a matter of indifference, because God's word forbids fellowship with errorists, and the Book of Concord does not place this among what it defines as indifferent things, but gives us plain statements of opposition to it. See pages 5-8.

4. The right rule for us is found in the Holy Scriptures, and the confession has grown out of this rule. The confession agrees with the rule, and thus both forbid fellowship with those who err in doctrine. See pages 8, 9.

5. The Lutheran system does not agree with any other. Those who disagree cannot have right fellowship, and therefore we cannot fellowship those who are at variance with us. See page 9.

6. Since we are not in harmony in doctrine with others, we cannot fellowship them even in so far as they agree with us, because nothing in the Bible allows such a course, but requires that there be *no divisions*. See pages 9-11.

7. It is often urged that we should fellowship others for charity's sake. Charity does not cover or connive at error, but rebukes it. They who do not discern the body of Christ in the Lord's Supper eat and drink unworthily, where the body and blood of Christ are really present, administered, and received, and thus they suffer injury. If we love them we cannot encourage them to do what is hurtful to them. See pages 11-14.

8. In the ancient Church, fellowship with those who would not accept the teachings of the Lord, and comply with his requirements, was forbidden. God gave one law only respecting his service, and he demanded that all should comply with it, and be circumcised not only in their flesh, but also in their hearts of every unsound doctrine and opinion. He would not permit his people to accord liberties to others which he did not allow to them. See pages 14-17, 24.

9. Some say that "it is the Lord's table; not mine," and that is the very reason why we cannot do with it as we please, but must follow our Lord's directions. See pages 17, 18.

10. Jesus taught his disciples to be tolerant, but that they could not serve two masters. They could not preach sound doctrine themselves, and then fellowship those who do not. Neither could they believe and obey the Master's words in his Holy Communion, and then fellowship those who disregard them. See pages 18, 19.

11. A positive prohibition of receiving those who do not hold the doctrine of Christ, but merely a part of it, is given in 2 John 9-11. See pages 20, 21.

12. Fellowship of errorists is wrong, because it is double mindedness and instability, and prepares our people to break their vows and go to others who not only err, but also regard us as material fit only for conversion to Christianity. See pages 21, 22.

13. There is an abundance of Scriptural testimony, but it is profitable only to those who can yield their reason and selfishness captive to the word of God. See pages 22, 23.

14. Lutherans have their confessional bond of union in the

teachings of the Book of Concord, and it separates and distinguishes them from all others. Others reject these confessions, and hold to their own, which do not agree with ours, and therefore ours plainly assert that it is impossible for us to fellowship those who reject our symbols of faith. The Augsburg Confession, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord especially speak plainly about this matter, and their reception or rejection manifests the sincerity or dishonesty of those who bear the name of Lutheran, and therefore all who understand them know which to do, accept or deny. See pages 23-25.

15. If at any time occasion should arise for us to defend these statements, we shall be found ready to do so, if it be the will of God. If any reader should wish to inquire further, we shall take pleasure in assisting such one.



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